

30 'chained' seniors protest security cuts

By EDNA M. BAILEY

Wrapped in paper chains, more than 30 senior citizens living in public housing yesterday attended a meeting of the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) to complain about service cutbacks and a lack of adequate security.

The chains were an attempt to symbolize their "immobility," which they say is a result of cutbacks in services and security.

"We have been, and we are now, fighting for security guards because our senior citizens and children are afraid to go outside of their doors," said Corine Williams, a spokeswoman for the Ironbound United Neighbors, which is composed of seniors living in the F.D. Roosevelt and Hyatt homes.

The meeting also was attended by representatives from Felix Fuld, Hayes and Stephen Crane public housing.

"We know the housing authority is legally required to provide security for its residents," said Johnnie Mae Mitchell. "We want nothing less."

"There have been too many cutbacks and too many services taken away from us. We have been asking for answers since November, and we haven't gotten any concrete answers," said Mrs. Mitchell.

After her presentation, the seniors burst into a spontaneous rendition of the hymn "Amen" with a chorus of "We want security guards."

NRHA Executive Director Milton A. Buck told the seniors that the level of security will be increased by April 1.

"It (security) won't be what we want, or what you want, but it will be increased," he said.

"We have been awarded a (Housing and Community Development Action) grant and \$100,000 will be allocated to security. You will see an increase in security around April 1, or shortly thereafter."



Photo by Mark Abraham

Johnnie Mae Mitchell of the Ironbound United Neighbors addresses NRHA commissioners

Buck said security personnel, whose salaries are paid through grants, will be placed in the regular management budget.

"We are not unmindful of security problems, and I think we've made a serious attempt to alleviate the problem," he said.

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Chairwoman Pearl Beatty listened to the group's demands, then reminded it that the Newark Tenant Council (NTC) is the tenant bargaining agent.

Roger Newman, an employee of the NTC, was willing to speak on behalf of the group, but NTC president James Rone said he was unaware of any affiliation between the two organizations and advised Newman to discuss the matter with him prior to addressing the board.

Beatty added, "If you do not recognize the NTC, we will not recognize you."

Notte loses legal fee bid

Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) yesterday decided not to pay the legal fees of former executive director Robert

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